

The MIGHTY EIGHTH VOICE

News About Headquarters Eighth Air Force



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8th Air Force
Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana

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QUICK TAKES

On-line leave forms

The Headquarters has implemented the newest automated tool called LeaveWeb, a paperless leave request, approval and tracking system.

Members requesting ordinary leave are required to use the automated system, however, special category leaves such as convalescent, emergency and permissive TDY, will continue to use the paper form.

To access LeaveWeb, go to <https://leave.barksdale.af.mil>, point and click on leave dates and all other pertinent information, as well as your e-mail address. LeaveWeb then will forward the link to your approving official. Once approved, both the approving official and member will receive approval notification.

If you have any questions, contact the Commander's Support Staff at 6-4598.

Data cards move to web

The Virtual Record of Emergency Data is now on the Virtual Military Personnel Flight website and is replacing the FormFlow version of the DD Form 93, Record of Emergency Data.

As with any change, not everyone can simultaneously complete their forms. The following timeline has been established:

Jan 27 - Feb 2: all headquarters deploying personnel.

Feb 10-16: all remaining headquarters personnel.

Go to www.afpc.randolph.af.mil and select the vMPF logo or call Senior Airman Nicole Johnson at 6-3718 for more information.



photo by Master Sgt. Dee Ann Poole

FOX News 'Live'

Greta Van Susteren, FOX News Channel, interviews Col. Doug Raaberg, 509th Bomb Wing commander, for the "On the Record" television show. The show was broadcast live from Whiteman Air Force Base Dec. 18. The FOX News Channel featured the base and the 509th BW every hour throughout the day.

Compass Call valuable to IO

By Capt. Chrissy Cuttita
355th Wing Public Affairs

Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.—Lieutenant Gen. Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander, recently visited his newest units at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. He provided insight into information integration, what it is, the role the D-M units play and what Information Operations mean for the future of military operations.

Under the new Air Force IO integration, D-M's two EC-130 Compass Call squadrons were re-aligned under the 8th Air Force along with all other IO assets October 2002.

The 41st and 43rd Electronic Combat Squadrons, along with the associated maintenance and operational support staff, are now known as Detachment 1, 55th Wing, Offutt AFB, Neb. Even though their chain of command changed, they remain stationed at D-M.

"The Compass Call mission will remain the same - to degrade or destroy enemy communications," said Capt. Dan Brooker, Det. 1 executive officer. "The goal of integration is to do this smarter—educate sister IO platforms on EC-130 capabilities, fa-

● See Compass Call, page 7

“Mighty Eighth” leader retires after 36 years

by Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya

8th Air Force Public Affairs

Eighth Air Force said goodbye to Brig. Gen. Bobby Efferson Jan. 8 during a retirement ceremony conducted here at the Officers' Club.

After 36 years as an Air Force officer, and the last four years as the mobilization assistant to the 8th Air Force commander, General Efferson passed the IMA reins and officially retired January 15. Brigadier Gen. John Bordelon, Jr. has been named to replace Efferson and is currently the CAOC director at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia.

“My heart is saddened knowing that it is my responsibility to say our official goodbye to Bobby,” said Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander. “He is the kind of man that every one of us respects. He is a close trusted advisor and has impacted the lives of many people during his career. It is a privilege to be part of a ceremony where we honor this great seasoned warrior.”

General Efferson was commissioned in 1967 after receiving his commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at Louisiana State University, and is a command pilot with more than 4,200 hours in fighter aircraft and more than 324 hours of combat time in Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Decisive Edge Operation in Bosnia. He has flown a variety of aircraft including the F-105 *Thunderchief*, F-4 *Phantom*, F-16 *Fighting Falcon* and A-10 *Thunderbolt II*.

“Flying combat missions in two different wars and doing what we have been trained to do has been the highlight of my career,” Efferson said. “Working with all the high-caliber professionals has been like playing in the Super Bowl ... I really feel like we have accomplished something special.”

The general has also been the air commander of one reserve fighter group and two reserve fighter wings. In 1991 he was recalled to active duty for six months in support of Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM and served as Forward



photo by Staff Sgt. Denise Rayder

Brigadier Gen. Bobby Efferson (right), 8th Air Force mobilization assistant to the commander, receives the Legion of Merit, second oak leaf cluster, from Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander, during his retirement ceremony Jan. 8. General Efferson retired after 36 years of service.

Operation Location commander and was an A-10 combat pilot at Al Louf Air Field, Saudi Arabia.

Prior to becoming the mobilization assistant at 8th Air Force, the general commanded the 301st Fighter Wing, Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, in Fort Worth, Texas, where he and his wife, Cyndy, now reside.

The general and his wife plan on remaining in the Fort Worth area, spending more time with family and traveling.

“I’ve got a lot coals in the fire right now, and am looking at some different business opportunities,” he said. “But the biggest thing we’d really like to do is travel, visit more of the national parks and see America.”

The general also had parting words for the men and women of the “Mighty Eighth.”

“I want to thank all of you for what you are accomplishing,” said the general. “I am proud, the Air Force is proud and the country is proud of the work and sacrifices you make everyday. Keep

doing it right!”

General Efferson is the recipient of the Legion of Merit with one oak leaf cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, and Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters.

Career at a glance

- Jan.- Dec. 1969, combat pilot, Takhli Royal Air Force Base, Thailand.
- Jan. 1970 - July 1972, instructor pilot, Moody AFB, Ga.
- July 1972 - July 1987, squadron operations officer, assistant deputy commander of operations and wing deputy commander of operations, 301st Tactical Fighter Wing, Carswell AFB, Texas.
- July 1987 - Dec. 1992, commander, 926th Fighter Group, Air Force Reserve, Naval Air Station, New Orleans, La.
- Jan. 1993 - July 1994, commander, 442nd Fighter Wing, Richards-Gebaur Air Reserve Base, Mo.
- July 1994 - April 1999, commander, 301st Fighter Wing, Fort Worth, Texas

Air Force changes high year of tenure

by Maj. John J. Thomas
Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs

RANDOLPHAIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN) — Airmen serving in most enlisted ranks will now have an additional two years available to serve on active duty.

The change, effective Jan. 1 and approved by the secretary of the Air Force recently, is part of an initiative to retain enlisted people's skills and experience, Air Force Personnel Center officials here said.

The revised high-year-of-tenure policy means senior airmen can serve up to 12 years of total service; technical sergeants up to 24 years; master sergeants up to 26 years; and senior master sergeants up to 28 years.

Remaining unchanged are staff sergeants at 20 years and chief master sergeants at 30 years.

"Extending years in service will increase our ability to adequately sustain a highly skilled enlisted force and reduce experienced-noncommissioned officer shortages created by both the drawdown in the early '90s, and lower retention trends for the past several years," said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray.

Seen as a good option for most airmen, later HYT dates

may affect the status of assignments, promotions, re-enlistments and evaluations for thousands of enlisted members, said officials.

"No one will be forced to stay longer, but a lot of people will be able to — if it fits their plans," said Master Sgt. Mike Hall, superintendent of retirements here. "We encourage everyone near their high year of tenure to visit their local military personnel flight, especially those with planned or pending assignments, separations or retirements."

In the case of senior airmen, HYT dates will automatically be extended to 12 years, regardless of any scheduled separation date after Dec. 31.

Those planning to leave the service soon may be allowed to continue to serve at their current duty location or be reassigned, based on Air Force needs, officials said.

Those airmen who have already spent government funds associated with a separation or retirement will be exempt from the changes, officials said.

Typically that includes people who have already shipped household goods, a car, or if their families have already moved using government funds.

"This policy change gives the Air Force the flexibility to keep our experienced people

longer. It's the right thing for the Air Force since we are a retention-based force," said Maj. Gen. John Spiegel, who is in charge of personnel policy at the Air Staff. "It should help us alleviate increased stress on some of our career fields and, at the same time, relieve some recruiting and training requirements."

"We have a pretty comprehensive set of instructions, but each case may be a little different. We understand that," Hall said. "It's best for everyone to be sure they understand how these changes will affect them personally."

"For instance, the system will not automatically set a person's retirement date based on the high year of tenure," he said.

"And although members' HYT dates will be extended, that will not automatically extend their projected (dates of separation)."

The last revision of HYT dates was in 2001, according to officials. At that time maximum years of service for technical sergeants was increased from 20 to 22 years.

Policies associated with years of service and high year of tenure will continue to be reviewed periodically to ensure they are meeting the needs of the Air Force and Air Force people, officials said.

When's the last time you filled out a Hometown News Release?

Want to show family and friends in your hometown significant accomplishments in your career?

Take advantage of the Hometown News Release Program! Simply fill out a HNR (DD Form 2266), now available electronically, package the form and send it to the Public Affairs office. That's it!

For more information contact the staff at DSN 781-2156 or e-mail 8AF/PA@barksdale.af.mil.



The "Mighty Eighth" Voice

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Eighth Air Force Commander
Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson

Chief, Public Affairs
Capt. Denise Kerr

Deputy Chief, Public Affairs
2nd Lt. Jennifer Ferrau

Editor
Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya
NCOIC, Public Affairs

Another five!



photo by Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya

Lieutenant Gen. Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander, gives the oath of enlistment to Staff Sgt. Shawn Koch, 26th Operational Weather Squadron recently during his reenlistment ceremony. Koch is a regional forecast supervisor and signed up for another five years.

Major Promotions

Congratulations to the following major selectees:

- Stephen J. Cicherski, 608th Air Intelligence Squadron
- Adam G. Gonzalez, 608th Air Intelligence Squadron
- Haider A. Khan, 9th Air Support Operations Squadron, Fort Hood, Texas
- Matthew P. Benivegna, 819th Red Horse Squadron, Malmstrom AFB, Mont.
- Michael W. Taylor, 8th Air Force/JA

Quarterly Award Winners

Congratulations to the following "Mighty Eighth's" 2002 4th Quarter Award Winners:

- **Airman:** Senior Airman Bradley J. Mauzy, 3rd Air Support Operations Group
- **Noncommissioned Officer:** Tech. Sgt. Marvin D. Gilliam, 8AF/SFX
- **Senior Noncommissioned Officer:** Master Sgt. William M. Loy, 26th Operational Weather Squadron,
- **Civilian, GS-8 and below:** Eva Theriot, 608th Air Support Squadron
- **Civilian, GS-9 and above:** Karl Geibel, 608th Air Support Squadron
- **Company Grade Officer:** 1st Lt. Timothy E. Brown, 608th Air Communications Squadron

Welcome to the "Mighty Eighth"

The following people joined the Headquarters 8th Air Force team in December and January.



- ♦ **1st Lt. Charles McGee**
608th Air Communications Squadron
- ♦ **Senior Master Sgt. Robert DeLorenzo**, 608th Air Intelligence Squadron
- ♦ **Senior Airman Amy Howard**
608th Combat Operations Squadron
- ♦ **Airman 1st Class Jeremiah Landini**
608th Air Communications Squadron
- ♦ **Senior Airman Gary Memolo**
608th Air Communications Squadron
- ♦ **Airman 1st Class Spencer Buskirk**
608th Air Communications Squadron
- ♦ **Airman 1st Class Tammi Heaney**
608th Air Communications Squadron

Does someone you know deserve to be "Spotlighted?"

Call public affairs at DSN 781-2156, or e-mail Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya at richard.delahaya@barksdale.af.mil



photo by Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya

Award presentation

Captain Mark Mitchem (right), 8th Air Force, receives the Air Force Commendation Medal from Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander. Mitchem received the medal for support he provided to the Coalition Forces Air Component Commander air operations in the Combined Air Operations Center during the first two months of OPERATION Enduring Freedom.

Aerospace Warrior Attitude

**1st Lt. Timothy Brown**

608th Air Communications Squadron

Years of service: 2**Hometown:** Richmond, Va.**Family:** Deborah A. Brown (wife),
Buster Brown (pet Beagle)**Job title:** Joint Tactical
Communications Engineer**Primary duties and responsibilities:** Lead
engineering teams that design
communication networks for
exercises and contingencies.**Most rewarding job aspect:**
Seeing thorough documentation of
a well-designed and implemented
network that fulfills the customer's
needs.**Goals:** Be able to look back on
my life and know the world's a little
better for me having been there.**Hobbies:** Bicycling, volunteering
with the Boy Scouts of America.**What motivates your winning
attitude:** We're only here for a
short time – do your best where
ever you find yourself**Favorite aspects of Barksdale:**
The outstanding base-wide recycling
program, the exercise trail from the 8th
Air Force Museum to the east side.**Editor's note:** To nominate an Aerospace Warrior,
the individual's supervisor should call the Public
Affairs office at 456-2156. Please include the
person's full name, rank and phone number.

Eighth Air Force Salutes!

STEP Promotions

Congratulations to the following "Mighty Eighth" STEP promotees:



photo by Capt. Denise Kerr

*Lieutenant Gen. Bruce
Carlson, 8th Air Force
commander, (right)
surprises Staff Sgt.
Barbara Rolfe, 608th Air
Communications
Squadron, with a STEP
promotion to technical
sergeant during an early
morning work out at the
fitness center Jan. 8.*

photo by Chief Master Sgt. Dean Crosier

Chief Master Sgt. Jeffrey
Ledoux (left), 8th Air Force
Command Chief and Lt.
Gen. Bruce Carlson (right),
8th Air Force commander,
STEP promote Staff Sgt.
Diane Hotaling Jan. 8 to
technical sergeant.
Hotaling's father, Senior
Master Sgt. Donald "Doc"
Miller (ret.), far right, looks
on.

Yearly Award Winners

Congratulations to the following "Mighty Eighth's" Headquarters'
2002 Annual Award Winners:**Airman**

● Senior Airman Kyle McSherry, 3rd Air Support Operations Group

Noncommissioned Officer

● SSgt Sgt. Shawn Minyon, 3rd Air Support Operations Group

Senior Noncommissioned Officer

● Master Sgt. Darrin Small, 819th RED HORSE Squadron

Civilian, GS-8 and below

● Eva Theriot, 608th Air Support Squadron

Civilian, GS-9 and above

● Alan Williams, 608th Air Operations Group

Company Grade Officer

● Capt. Kevin Osborne, 819th RED HORSE Squadron

Coin Toss!

Commanders from around the area were invited to the MainStay Independence Bowl in Shreveport, La., Dec. 27, as honorary coin tossers before the game. From left to right are Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commander, Brig. Gen. Jack C. Ihle, 917th Wing commander and Col. Charles H. McGuirk Jr., 2nd Bomb Wing vice-commander.



courtesy photo

Meet the new commander

Lt. Col. Pat Hoffman 608th Combat Operations Squadron



Hometown: Augusta, Ga.

Past Assignments: Air Battle Manager on AWACS and in ground units in Korea, Germany, Italy, and Bosnia-Herzegovina; Olmsted Scholar, Universität Augsburg, Germany; Student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.; Student, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, Ala.; Mission Crew Commander, Director of Operations, and Deputy Commander, 964th Airborne Air Control Squadron, Tinker AFB, Okla.

Education:

1981 Bachelor of Science in Biology, summa cum laude, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio

1991 Squadron Officers' School, Distinguished Graduate, Maxwell AFB, Ala.; Secretary of the Air Force Leadership Award for the #1 Graduate of SOS for 1991

1992 Master of Arts in International Affairs, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla.

1999 Master of Military Operational Art and Science, Distinguished Graduate, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

2000 Master of Airpower Art and Science, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

Off-duty time is for: Traveling to new places

Hobbies: Hiking, Team Sports, Photography

Goals: To serve a full military career and be the best leader I can in any given situation; to climb four of the Seven Summits of

the World (two down, two to go); to retire with my family on the beach

What challenges do you see as a commander: The greatest challenge is balancing the responsibility for completing my unit's mission with the responsibility for taking care of my troops.

Commanders at all levels today are faced with the need to do more with less, so the challenge is to motivate our warriors to take on new tasks with a positive attitude and then to be able to recognize them appropriately for their efforts.

Advice to those pursuing an Air Force career: Living the Air Force life is truly an adventure. We live in dynamic times where things change at the speed of a TV transmission signal.

If you strive to do your best wherever you are - on a remote tour, living in a tent city, or in your dream assignment - your adventure will be a rewarding one for yourself, your family, and your country.

● *Compass Call, from page 1*

cilitate better coordination through joint training and new equipment and to develop an IO focus among similar assets rather than a weapon-system specific focus as in the past.”

In a commander’s call with the EC-130 squadrons here, Carlson explained the Air Force IO concept is something he did not know much about until he was given orders to take charge and integrate.

“I think there is an incredible amount of power integrating IO,” said Carlson. “To make things better, it will take the people in IO units to make it happen.”

The goal is to have units take off two years from now knowing and believing they are a piece of this integrated system, said the general. It is a new concept in the way the Air Force will fight its wars. The concept is often defined as a non-kinetic means of engaging in combat. This is an operational level outside of the tactical and kinetic means of dropping bombs on target done by traditional strike aircraft.

According to Carlson, the first task in reaching this goal is to test, train, exercise and demonstrate the integration of IO assets. One of the first demonstrations was done for United States Strategic Command in an exercise called Global Strike last year at Nellis AFB, Nev.

A D-M EC-130 Compass Call aircraft participated in this exercise with B-2 bombers, E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System, RC-135 Rivet Joint, JSTARS, U-2 surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, Navy E-6A communications relay and strategic airborne command post aircraft, and space assets. They all worked together in a simulated pre-strike reconnaissance mission to find and fix a target.

To complete the kill chain, the force required timely command and control for the B-2 to successfully engage the target. After the strike, these same assets coordinated their reconnaissance effort to assess the strike mission. Commanders were able to execute the mission and assess results all within two hours, a record time, but longer than anticipated for future endeavors.

“Increased exposure to reconnaissance



photo by Tech. Sgt. Marlin Zimmerman

A crew chief with the 41st Electronic Combat Squadron safely marshals a EC-130 Compass call aircraft off the ramp as aircraft 1585 departs for a local mission. The 41st ECS is a part of Detachment 1, a tenant unit stationed at Davis-Monthan AFB, but now under the command of the 55th Wing at Offut Air Force Base, Neb.

platforms will bear future fruit in the form of knowledgeable war-planners who can leverage the full potential of the various weapon systems,” said Brooker. “Initial stages of the integration are proceeding smoothly. There are many firsts such as a joint-tactics-review between the EC-130 Compass Call and the RC-135 Rivet Joint.”

Working together, IO assets provide three things all military taskings need, according to Carlson. First, IO provides intelligence so the military can find, fix and access what is happening. Second, IO provides battle management which tracks targets through command and control assets in hopes of reaching the third necessity, the desired outcome of a military action.

Compass Call aircraft are able to exploit intelligence and non-kinetically engage hostile command and control communication systems. Aircraft like E-3 AWACS and RC-135 Rivet Joint provide the command and control, and target queuing for Compass Call. The connectivity needed between all IO assets was a critical lesson learned in Global Strike; making evident the need for integrated training.

Personnel working on such assets throughout 8th Air Force will start to see new simulators that teach them to train in

an environment where they can recognize they are not the only one in the battlefield. Most of the assets are low density and high demand, therefore, coordinating exercises will be a challenge.

Without the aircraft needed to stage an exercise, Carlson looks forward to distributed mission training. This new computer technology can link the assets from their home stations so units can train together on simulators instead of meeting in person for an exercise.

“It’s critical to integrate what you (EC-130 personnel) do with what they (other IO assets) do,” said Carlson. The general believes most of the good ideas will come from the people working in those units. IO integration is a process set to improve itself over time. Spaceborne assets will bear other challenges when integrating with IO also, but Carlson said the resources are already out there.

“The future is bright for Compass Call,” said Brooker. “The aircraft is already being modified with technology to provide a clearer picture of the air war.”

Separated at birth, reunited in service

by Airman Joe Lacdan

509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo.

— Michael McCutcheon never knew his older brother who was put up for adoption. The 28-year-old senior airman assigned to the 509th Maintenance Squadron here made efforts to find his older sibling, but each year his interest began to fade.

Then recently, as McCutcheon sat with family members at his parents' house in Odessa, Texas, the phone rang.

His father answered. In tears, he handed the phone to McCutcheon.

"Hey brother," said the voice on the phone.

The voice was that of his brother, Jonathan Webb, who was alive and well, living in Utah. To McCutcheon's surprise, his brother also serves in the Air Force and is a first lieutenant stationed at Hill Air Force Base.

"I got a chill up my spine, and I was all excited," McCutcheon said. "I had so many mixed emotions and so many questions because he's my brother and he's full blood."

Growing up in the bustling west Texas town of Lubbock, McCutcheon grew up with dreams of someday finding lost artifacts and civilizations. He set the example for his younger siblings as the oldest remaining son of James and Loretta McCutcheon. But as he approached his teenage years, questions about his older brother loomed.

"My parents spoke little about Jonathan, but never kept it a secret," McCutcheon said. "They didn't know too much about him after he was gone."

His need to find his lost older brother peaked when McCutcheon turned 18. He tried checking the Internet, calling search organizations, and went to the hospital in Amarillo, Texas, where his brother was born.

Years passed, and McCutcheon married in the summer of 1994. He enlisted in the Air Force in October 1997 and received a job as an aircraft metals



photo by Staff Sgt. Francesca Popp

Senior Airman Michael McCutcheon (left) and 1st Lt. Jonathan Webb, brothers who were separated at birth, meet for the first time at the Kansas City International Airport. Webb, who is a year older than McCutcheon, is assigned to Hill Air Force Base, Utah, while McCutcheon serves at Whiteman AFB, Mo.

technologist. Reality began setting in that he may never find his brother.

"Every year it slowly started to get where I would think less about finding him," McCutcheon said. "I would always wonder what he's doing and if he's thinking about me. But then I figured, 'I'm 28 years old now, and I'm sure he's living a good life.' Every year it just got further and further out of my mind."

Meanwhile, Webb was raised in western Colorado and enjoyed computer games and radio-controlled race cars. He said he led a happy life and felt content with his adoptive family which included two sisters. Webb's adoptive parents did not hide the truth about his adoption at birth.

"I certainly never had any resentment (toward my birth parents), because I enjoyed a life filled with great opportunities," he said.

The chance to become an Air Force officer was one of those opportunities.

Webb said his adoptive father served in the Army and strongly encouraged Jonathan to become an Air Force officer. Webb received his commission at the University of Oklahoma in 2000 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and criminology.

While content with his life, the question of his biological relatives lingered. He began searching for his biological parents at 18, the legal age to begin a search.

Initially he said he searched out of curiosity, then in the summer of 1997 he married Oklahoma-native Kelly Barrington. The birth of the couple's first child, Brittany, changed his outlook and desire to find his birth parents.

"I got a greater sense in the back of my mind for genetic heritage," Jonathan said.

Webb's initial attempts to locate his

● See *Brothers*, page 10

B-52 sees biggest improvement in 15 years

by Capt. Catie Hague

Air Force Flight Test Center Public Affairs

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. (AFPN) — After three years of planning, Air Force flight test experts here introduced a new offensive avionics system for the B-52 Stratofortress.

Flight testing of the B-52 Avionics Midlife Improvement, known as AMI, began in mid-December and is scheduled to continue through March 2004, with 80 sorties averaging eight hours long and several global missions planned to last more than 24 hours.

The AMI program is specifically designed to upgrade the B-52H offensive avionics system and includes replacing the inertial navigation system, the avionics control unit, the data transfer system and all associated hardware and software.

"It is the biggest improvement to the B-52 in 12 (to) 15 years," said Maj. Ed Bellem, B-52 flight commander and AMI project pilot. "AMI is a critical modification; an essential upgrade needed to keep the B-52 airborne."

"Processors equivalent to the Commodore 64 are being removed and replaced with (Pentium II-level) processing capabilities," Bellem said. "This improvement will ensure the airplane knows where it is at all times and can accurately deliver bombs on target."

As the main hub for all AMI flight testing, approximately 200 people at Edwards are dedicated to the program; however, the B-52's avionics upgrade stretches far beyond the boundaries of the base.

Boeing's Wichita, Kan., division is responsible for the overall development of AMI. Key players include people from the Boeing High Desert Assembly Integration and Test Centers; the 419th Flight Test Squadron and the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center at Edwards; the 49th Test and Evaluation Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base,



photo by David Siu

A B-52 Stratofortress takes off from Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., on a flight to test its new avionics system. The new system is part of the B-52 Avionics Midlife Improvement program. Flight tests began in December and will run through March 2004. The upgrade is the most significant improvement made to the bomber in the last 15 years.

La.; and the B-52 system program office at Tinker AFB, Okla.

"Everybody is hustling to keep this program on track," said David Siu, B-52 flight test manager and AMI project manager.

The \$8.5 million effort is on time and on cost, but the schedule is the greatest risk.

"The fleet starts living off spare parts in 2004," said Bellem. "The current INS is becoming unsupportable."

With the B-52 approaching its 51st anniversary, parts to repair, maintain and replace are just not available, he said.

Some of the manufacturers are going out of business, while others are trying to stay on the front end of technology, spending their money to support new platforms as opposed to old ones, according to Siu.

AMI is not only needed to prevent capability loss caused by a lack of vendors and non-supportable equipment, but the improvement will also ensure compatibility with new and future weapon systems, he said.

"Without this avionics upgrade, there is no way weapons coming online today or in the future will be able to operate

with the B-52 as their platform," said Maj. Merrice Spencer, a B-52 navigator and chief of avionics and weapons integration.

To date, AMI is conquering these main system shortcomings and performing as designed, said Bellem.

"So far, the upgrade has been almost transparent to us," he said, "but there has been a significant improvement in reliability, which corresponds to mission-capable rate."

The average time between aircraft needing extensive repairs has increased from an average of 700 hours to an average of 7,500 hours.

AMI's extensive flight-test schedule is based on the capability of the B-52 itself. The aircraft can carry a 20 to 30 varying weapon types — more than any other platform in the inventory. Flight testing must maximize weapon scenarios to demonstrate AMI's ability to enhance mission performance.

"The B-52 has proven its flexibility over 50 years, from dropping bombs at 50,000 feet to providing close-air support," said Spencer. "The flexibility of this bomber will continue well into the future."

Raising the roof!

Construction workers begin raising the new roof on the 8th Air Force headquarters building. The building was gutted after a lightning strike started a fire that destroyed the building March 11, 2001. The reconstruction is expected to be complete late this year.



photo by Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya

● Brothers, from page 8

parents led to dead ends. Then he contacted the lawyer who arranged his adoption and discovered his mother's maiden name was Moore.

Webb tracked his parent's marriage date with his mother's name and with that information, he acquired his birth parent's phone number through an Internet search engine.

He dialed the number and the voice of an older man answered. Webb asked the man if he had been married in December 1973.

The man said, "Yes," and asked Webb if his birth date was Aug. 23, 1973.

Webb said, "Yes."

"Looks like you finally found us," said Webb's biological father.

After a week of endless telephone calls to his new-found brother, McCutcheon and his wife, Susan, and his grandparents waited at the Kansas City International Airport for the brother he never knew.

McCutcheon's wife said earlier that day her husband jumped around the family's house "giddy as a school girl."

At 6 p.m., Michael would meet the brother he never knew.

McCutcheon learned he had a niece and a sister-in-law. Webb not only found his biological parents, but learned he had three younger brothers, Michael, Bill (who passed away in a vehicle accident) and Shawn.

"It's him!" McCutcheon said as he turned to the gate.

McCutcheon and Webb locked in a long embrace. Three decades of curiosity and doubt seemed to fade.

"(Meeting Michael for the first time was) amazing," Webb said. "I had all this curiosity about the past 30 years. We can both go back and see what the other path would have been. How many people get to do that?"

Senior Airman Michael McCutcheon (left) and 1st Lt. Jonathan Webb meet for the first time at the Kansas City International Airport.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Francesca Popp